



Wisdom from the Word

Nurturing Connections and Community

As nurses and as men and women of faith, we are called to care both for those in our personal care and for our communities. Post-COVID and amid the social and cultural tumult in our nation, we have experienced separation while witnessing increasing stress, violence, physical, spiritual, and mental health challenges. Disconnection continues to be felt as gaps widen following episodes of violence, destruction of property, and increasing polarities over continuing ethnic and gender differences. We want to be seen. We want to be heard.

How do we promote connection in our personal communities and in our places of worship and neighborhoods? How do we impact the professional communities where we work and the larger profession of nursing? As you read the following verses and discussion questions, be open to the ways God may be leading.

HEARING THE WORD

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV).

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:

If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Read through the Ecclesiastes verses a second time. Take time to process these questions:

- As humans, we often value being able to do things independently.

What do these verses tell us about having this type of perspective?

- What are some examples of the advantages of living in community with others from these verses?
- Meditate on the beautiful word picture of a strong braided rope reminding us that “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” How does God work with others in our lives as a source of strength?

APPLICATION

The stresses of our lives affect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. A major lesson from recent years has been our need for connection and community. We are asking tough questions of ourselves and of God. Many of us are rediscovering the value of simple things. We also have been able to experience healing and provide healing in others' lives as we intentionally listen to each other.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor martyred in the Nazi resistance in World War II, wrote about the power of listening in community. In a book compiled posthumously from his writings, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, Bonhoeffer (1978) wrote:

The first service one owes to others in a community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God's Word, the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them. God's love for us is shown by the fact that God not

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only gives God's Word, but also lends us God's ear. We do God's work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them. (p. 97)

Consider these ideas and questions.

- What challenges or barriers do you experience when listening to others?
- What steps can you take to become a better listener? Consider specific examples from your personal and professional life.
- With whom in your life can you share your frustrations, pain, or loss? How could you cultivate deeper relationships with others?
- How can you create space to listen to those you may not agree with?
- How can you begin to trust God when you don't understand what is happening around you or when you experience deep loss or pain?

Listening can be an intentional act of love that builds and deepens community. Listening opens doors to greater understanding and creates space for healing and reconciliation and is an important first step that demonstrates God's love.

Note: If you want to connect and have deeper community with others, please contact us at ncf@intervarsity.org and let us know your desire to be a part of student or nurse group. If no group exists in your area, we would be happy to share with you how to start a group and to pray for God's leading in your next steps.

Bonhoeffer, D. (1978). *Life together: The classic exploration of Christian community*. Harper One.